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Hiring? Look Down the Street

A Checkers franchisee says tapping into local talent can change your workforce for the better.



Checkers franchisee Nicole Wilski looks within her community to hire top-notch talent. Checkers
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Nicole Wilski, formerly a financial adviser for her family's florist business, is now building a successful collection of Checkers units across the Detroit market. Wilski took her business administration education to the quick-serve restaurant world in 2009 and has since opened six Checkers in the Motor City.

With more than 150 employees under her management, Wilski has predominantly hired through a community-based [hiring](#) program called Michigan Works. By sourcing new hires through the program, she has recruited a hard-working, loyal string of employees who contribute to her units' growth.

Wilski explains the methodology behind her hiring success and why funneling workers from the nearby community is a win-win for business, both in the short-term and the long-term.

1. Be open to trying new hiring methods

When I first started in 2009, I had heard of Michigan Works and what it could potentially provide, but never saw it through with my first store. When I opened my second store, Michigan Works approached me to see if I'd be interested. I had no reservations and was more than willing to work with the program. Every potential hire is unemployed and located in the local community.

Many of the people I've hired through the program have gone on to management positions for their respective stores—if not to a higher position—and have stayed fiercely loyal and dedicated to their job. There is a hard-working aspect about them that works out for everybody, including the growth of the business.

As a business owner, I like to promote from within, and someone coming in from a program like Michigan Works who has the potential to become a manager is an employee you always want.

2. Take advantage of outside resources

Outside of Michigan Works, there was a lot of time spent trying to hire new employees. From applications to the actual interview process, hiring can get tedious and take time away from other aspects of business. With Michigan Works, I don't need to market myself or my business. They screen individuals who potentially fit our qualifications, and we interview them accordingly.

We even use conference rooms and Michigan Works offices for interviews. Instead of posting jobs on the Web or at local schools, [colleges](#), or churches, I can contact Michigan Works if new or more employees are needed. This could be difficult for some franchisees who feel the need to have complete control of everything, but a program like this is a win-win across the board.

Seek out these programs and the potential employees that they can provide. From my experience, employees hired from Michigan Works have been more driven and tend to stay with us longer.

3. Diversify your workforce

Community involvement in this industry is huge, and sourcing local employees has quite a meaningful impact. We do additional community-based practices, such as [fundraising](#) or donations, but hiring people that live down the street—and perhaps have lived here all their lives—creates teamwork unlike any other method. These people have friends and family in the community. They go to the church down the street from the restaurant. They are always bringing people into your businesses as a result of their local ties, and it impacts the business in so many positive ways.

I tend to think most of these positive impacts come from the broad age range of employees from Michigan Works. Quick service is predominantly a younger workforce, but we get employees from the entire spectrum. Additionally, these community members have possibly fallen on hard times. They are dedicated to bettering themselves and their family.

For example, there was a husband and wife that were both hired through Michigan Works at entry-level positions. They have since worked up through the ranks and are both in management positions. Having that sort of impact and involvement with the local community has been a tremendous help to the success of the brand.

4. Leverage the community

Typically, when we open a new unit, we hire between 35 and 55 jobs for the restaurant. Prior to the doors opening, there were a lot more jobs created, or at least secured, with regards to construction jobs that happen as a result. Every time I open a new store, I get to channel these local workers from my community and have them work in their hometown, or at least the town in which they live.

It's a great feeling as a business owner to contribute to the community. It's also a financially sound decision. Without the need to hire a headhunter or continually market my business as an employer, I get to save money and time and focus my attention on the staff that is already there.

From my experience, locations rooted in the community have brought me the most success in regard to potential hires. I grew up in Detroit and still live in the area. Boosting my hometown and providing work for individuals and their families is my responsibility as a business owner. This program provides me the security and stability that my growth will continue to source these loyal, dedicated, and committed workers from any community.